



# Urban Forest Management Strategy

# Acknowledgements

We acknowledge with gratitude and respect that the name Coquitlam was derived from the hə́hə́míə́m (HUN-kuh-MEE-num) word kʷíkʷə́lə́m (kwee-KWET-lum) meaning “Red Fish Up the River”. The City is honoured to be located on the kʷíkʷə́lə́m traditional and ancestral lands, including those parts that were historically shared with the ǫ́íćə́y (kat-zee) and other Coast Salish Peoples.

We would also like to acknowledge the time and effort contributed by the City of Coquitlam staff across departments, the Sustainability and Environmental Advisory Committee, and Diamond Head Consulting Ltd. in the development of this Urban Forest Management Strategy.

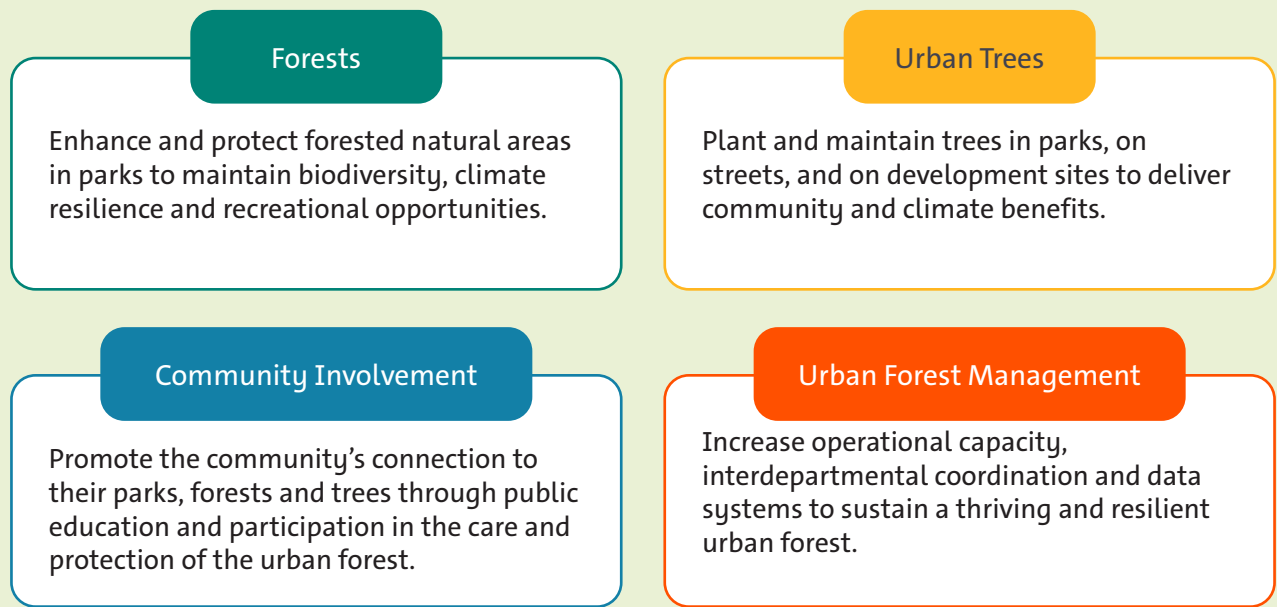
# Executive Summary

*Coquitlam's urban forest is a living network of trees, parks and forests that makes our city greener, cooler and healthier. Together we will grow, protect and care for the urban forest so that it continues to support nature and community for generations to come.*

Coquitlam's urban forest is a core part of the city's landscape and identity. From established neighbourhoods in the southwest to the forested slopes of Burke Mountain, trees contribute to the character of streets and public spaces, provide critical habitat in parks and riparian areas, and connect people to nature.

With 52% canopy cover city-wide and 33% within the Urban Containment Boundary, Coquitlam's urban forest is extensive and diverse. It includes street trees, active developed parks, forested natural areas, and private lands, each playing a role in supporting climate resilience, biodiversity and human well-being. As growth continues, the City is adapting how it plans for and manages the urban forest to meet evolving needs.

The Urban Forest Management Strategy provides a coordinated, long-range framework to guide the protection, enhancement and maintenance of the urban forest over the next 20 years. The Strategy is organized around four theme areas and four goals:



Implementation will be delivered through an Implementation Plan that is updated periodically, providing a clear structure for phased investment, interdepartmental coordination and ongoing evaluation. This approach enables the City to align actions with capital planning cycles, track progress using measurable indicators, and adapt over time as conditions, data and community needs evolve. As Coquitlam continues to grow, this Strategy will help grow, protect and care for Coquitlam's living network of trees so it continues to support the community for generations to come.

# Contents

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Acknowledgements.....	2
Executive Summary .....	3
<b>1.0 Introducing the Strategy .....</b>	<b>5</b>
1.1 The Benefits of Urban Forests and Why We Manage Them.....	7
1.2 A Forested City: Coquitlam’s Urban Forest Over Time .....	8
1.3 Coquitlam’s Forest Systems .....	9
1.4 Coquitlam’s Urban Forest Assets .....	10
1.5 Urban Forest Management Contributions .....	11
<b>2.0 Drivers of Forest Change .....</b>	<b>12</b>
2.1 Climate Change, Emergent Pests and Diseases.....	13
2.2 Disturbance Agents .....	13
2.3 Urban Development.....	14
2.4 Community Involvement .....	15
<b>3.0 Vision for the Future .....</b>	<b>16</b>
3.1 What We Heard .....	17
<b>4.0 Strategic Framework.....</b>	<b>18</b>
4.1 Forests.....	20
4.2 Urban Trees .....	22
4.3 Community Involvement .....	24
4.4 Urban Forest Management .....	26
<b>5.0 Implementation and Monitoring .....</b>	<b>28</b>
5.1 Targets and Monitoring Progress.....	29
<b>6.0 References .....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Appendix 1 Glossary.....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Appendix 2 What Our Urban Forest Looks Like Now .....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Appendix 3 Policy Context.....</b>	<b>35</b>



# **1.0 Introducing the Strategy**

# 1.0 Introducing the Strategy

Coquitlam’s urban forest is a defining part of the city’s identity. From the forests of Mundy Park to street trees in new neighbourhoods on Burke Mountain, it includes all trees and supporting vegetation across public and private land (Figure 1). The urban forest is a connected, living system that interacts with soil, water and air, and provides ecosystem services that support both ecological health and community well-being.

The Urban Forest Management Strategy is Coquitlam’s long-range plan for managing trees and forested areas as the community continues to grow and change. It provides a coordinated framework to guide planning, investment and long-term decision-making while also supporting near-term implementation that will help the City prioritize investments, track progress and adjust course as conditions evolve.

The Strategy recognizes the need to balance urban growth with ecological function, and to integrate trees more fully into land use, development, and infrastructure planning. It supports the City’s broader objectives around sustainability, climate adaptation and public health, and aligns with key policies such as the *Official Community Plan*, the *Environmental Sustainability Plan*, the *Climate Adaptation Strategic Plan* and the *Climate Action Plan*.

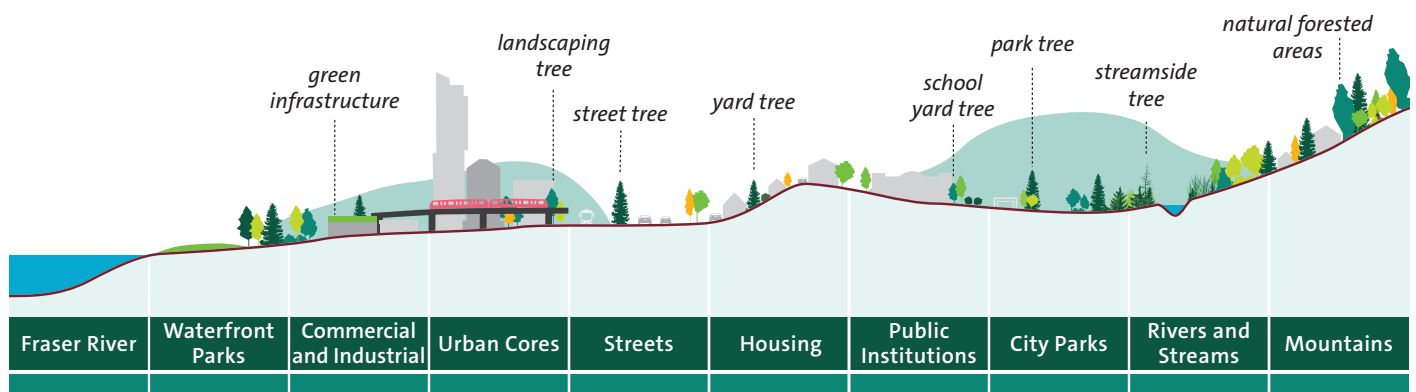


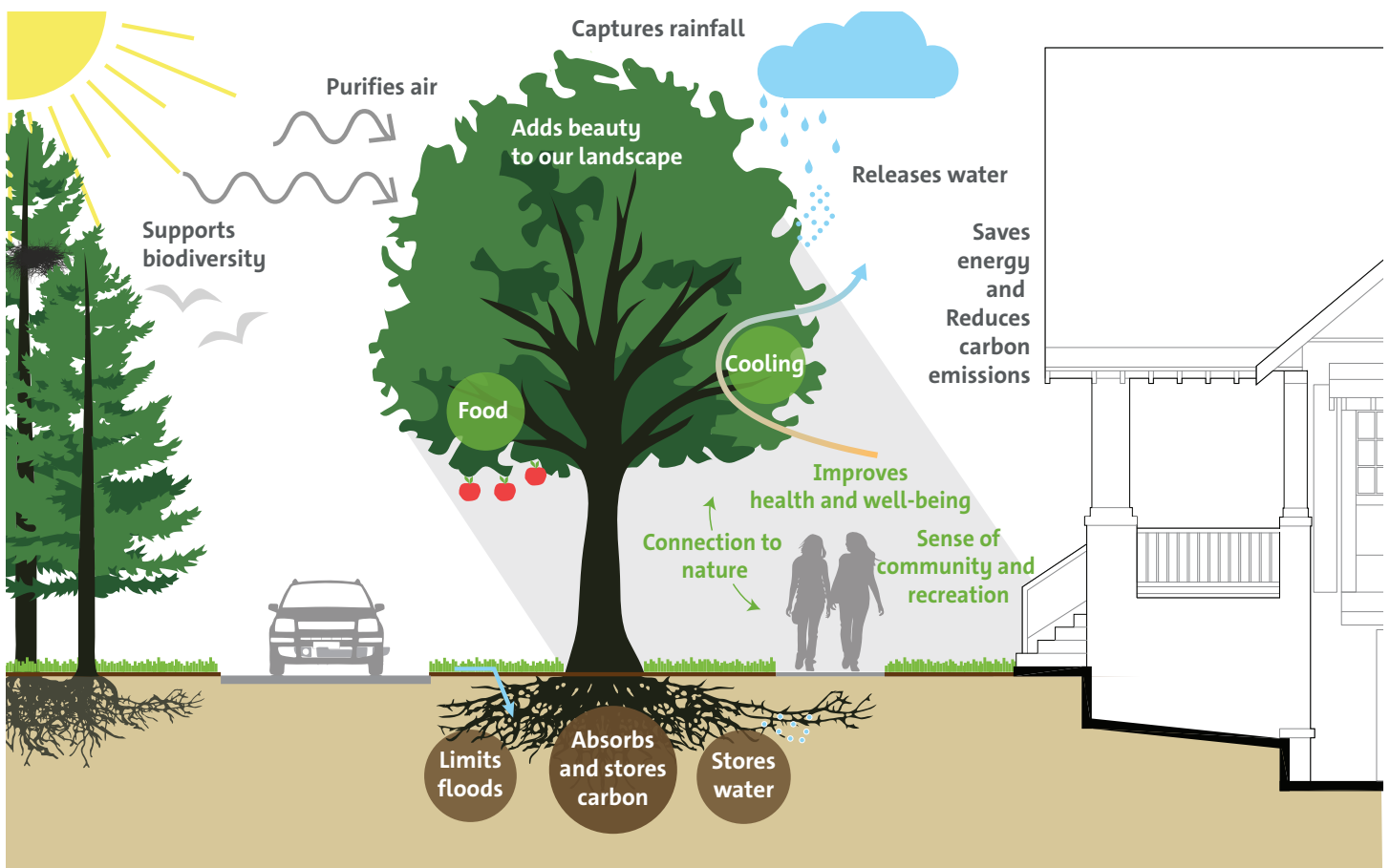
Figure 1 Coquitlam’s urban forest includes all trees on both private and public land. Public institutions include schools, hospitals and government facilities.

# 1.1 The Benefits of Urban Forests and Why We Manage Them

Coquitlam’s urban forest is part of what makes our city so vibrant, welcoming and liveable. Trees and forested areas provide measurable ecological services, such as cooling through shade and evapotranspiration, improved air and water quality, slope stabilization and stormwater management. They also play a key role in supporting biodiversity, including salmon-bearing creeks and critical habitats for wildlife [1, 2, 3].

These services are not only environmental; they directly benefit people. Exposure to nature has been shown to lower stress, boost creativity and cognitive function, and decrease rates of depression and chronic illness [4]. Urban green spaces also promote physical activity, strengthen social connections and foster emotional resilience within communities [5]. Trees and forests also protect communities from extreme heat by providing shade and cooling the air through evapotranspiration [6].

Figure 2. Benefits provided by the urban forest



The value of these benefits is significant. Coquitlam’s urban forest is **estimated to provide over \$161 million** in ecological value, including \$151 in total carbon stored and nearly \$10 million in annual benefits from air pollution removal, carbon storage and stormwater regulation<sup>1</sup>. These figures reflect only part of the forest’s broader contribution to community well-being and climate resilience.

Proactive urban forest management ensures these benefits are sustained, equitably distributed, and aligned with the city’s growth and development.

<sup>1</sup> In this report, the ecosystem services provided by Coquitlam’s urban forest were assessed using i-Tree Canopy, developed by the US Forest Service.

## 1.2 A Forested City: Coquitlam’s Urban Forest Over Time

The story of Coquitlam’s urban forest begins long before urbanization. The Coquitlam River watershed and parts of the Pitt River watershed were the ancestral and traditional territories of *kʷikwə́ləm* First Nation [7]. They have stewarded these lands and waters since time immemorial. The name *kʷikwə́ləm*, meaning “red fish up the river”, reflects the important connection between the people, the landscape and the salmon that sustained *kʷikwə́ləm* peoples.

European settlement began in the 1860s, concentrated in the southwest corner of what is now the City of Coquitlam [8]. Drawn by the region’s abundant natural resources, settlers established Fraser Mills in 1889, which became one of the largest sawmills in the world at the time. This spurred the growth of a logging-based community and the French-Canadian neighbourhood of Maillardville in 1910. The area’s development was shaped by river and rail transportation, with logging and milling giving way to early urbanization.

The landscape began changing significantly after the Second World War. Farms and second-growth forests gradually gave way to residential neighbourhoods, driven by car ownership, transit expansion and suburban growth [9, 10, 11]. In the 1970s and 1980s, planning efforts focused on Coquitlam Town Centre, creating a compact civic and commercial hub surrounded by higher-density housing, parks and civic spaces [12]. Across the city, many lands were transformed into public green space, expanding the urban forest in key areas. In City Centre, Lafarge Lake was converted from a gravel pit to a public park in 1978 [12]. In the 1990s, historic agricultural lands were transferred to Metro Vancouver, creating major protected areas like Minnekhada Regional Park and *Áléxətəm* Regional Park (formerly Colony Farm Regional Park). During the same period, Pinecone Burke Provincial Park was created by the Province of British Columbia. In 2025, Widgeon Marsh Regional Park, which includes 600 hectares of protected wetland, opened to the public.



*(left) Aerial image of Southwest Coquitlam and (right) Lafarge Lake (Credit: James Wheeler)*

Today, Coquitlam’s urban forest reflects this complex history of natural systems, land use change, and stewardship. In the southwest, older neighbourhoods with larger lots retain mature canopy cover, while industrial areas along the Fraser River remain more tree-limited. Large parks like Mundy Park and Coquitlam River Park anchor the city’s ecological network, connected by forested stream corridors that provide habitat, shading and storm water function. As older infrastructure is upgraded, programs like the City’s Frontage Works initiative create opportunities to retrofit streetscapes with new trees and planting zones.

In contrast, Northeast Coquitlam is developing under long-term master plans that integrate green space with new housing and infrastructure. While development in this area may reduce canopy, particularly in the short term, robust landscaping standards, street tree requirements, and natural park connections will help to re-establish the urban forest over time. The area’s public realm is being designed to support tree growth on both public and private land, with new trees eventually complementing the surrounding regional and provincial forest lands.



*(left) Residential areas in Southwest Coquitlam and (right) Northeast Coquitlam.*

## 1.3 Coquitlam's Forest Systems

Coquitlam sits within the Coastal Western Hemlock, dry maritime subzone (CWHdm) [13], a temperate rainforest ecosystem characterized by mild, wet winters and warm, dry summers. The region has one of the longest growing seasons in British Columbia, with approximately 222 frost-free days per year. Average annual precipitation exceeds 1,800 mm, while temperatures typically range from 0°C in winter to 30°C in summer. These conditions explain why forests have regenerated quickly and why urban trees can thrive when soil and moisture conditions are favourable.

Coquitlam's mature forest stands (a distinct, relatively uniform section of forest) typically include western hemlock, Douglas-fir and western redcedar, with understories of salal, red huckleberry and mosses. In wetter and higher-elevation sites, species like amabilis fir and yellowcedar are more common. On lower, warmer slopes and valley floors, grand fir, bigleaf maple and black cottonwood thrive. Red alder is often the first to establish on disturbed sites, helping rebuild soil structure and support succession, while black cottonwood and Sitka spruce are prominent in riparian areas and floodplains. Protecting and restoring Coquitlam's forested areas is key to sustaining Coquitlam's urban forest as both an ecological system and a defining part of the city's identity.



*Coast Mountains (Credit: James Wheeler)*

## 1.4 Coquitlam's Urban Forest Assets

Coquitlam's urban forest includes trees in many different settings: along streets, in parks, within natural areas, and on private land. These trees fall into four main asset classes, each managed differently depending on location, ownership, and level of public use. The City's commitment to the care and management of each category of trees is referred to as a 'service level'.

### 1.4.1 Street Trees

**New street trees** are typically planted by developers within public rights-of-way as part of subdivision and development projects. The City also directly plants a smaller number of street trees each year. Once established, the City assumes responsibility for their care, including regular pruning, watering during establishment, and eventual replacement. These trees provide shade, define neighbourhood character and contribute to the livability of the city's communities.



### 1.4.2 Landscape Trees

**Trees in parks and in the grounds of public buildings**, such as Town Centre Park and Poirier Civic Grounds, define the character of the city and contribute to the enjoyment of these spaces. The City plants and is responsible for routine maintenance to ensure park trees deliver their maximum lifespan and size.



### 1.4.3 Trees in Forested Natural Areas

**Trees in forested parks and natural areas** are managed at a broader landscape scale, focusing on species diversity, succession planting, and disease and fire risk mitigation with maintenance prioritized near trails and gathering areas that people frequent.



### 1.4.4 Private Trees

**Private trees** make up a large portion of Coquitlam's total canopy. While the City does not directly manage trees on private land, it supports their protection and planting through development requirements, environmental bylaws and public education. Stewardship programs also encourage residents to care for trees and understand their role in creating a healthy, connected urban forest.



## 1.5 Urban Forest Management Contributions

Urban forest management is shared across departments. The **Parks and Capital Projects** department leads the program, with a team of qualified professional staff responsible for over 17,000 street and park trees, as well as over 800 hectares of forested parkland. Their work includes planting, maintenance, restoration of natural areas, and administration of the Tree Management Bylaw.

The **Planning and Development** department develops key planning policies that define future parks and green spaces, develops urban design guidelines, and administers development permit processes to steward environmentally sensitive areas, tree planting and retention. Staff review Building Permit submissions for compliance with tree retention/replacement requirements for developments within Northeast Coquitlam.

The **Engineering and Public Works** department plans, implements, operates and maintains the City's systems that enable and support the delivery of high-quality water for drinking and firefighting, sanitary waste disposal, solid waste collection, storm water management, environmental protection and transportation services, along with corporate fleet and GIS services. They handle tree installations linked to capital projects and for offsite servicing associated with developments. They oversee the protection and function of watersheds and riparian areas through Watercourse Protection Development Permits and Integrated Watershed Management Plans, ensuring these function as part of the stormwater management system. They are also responsible for emergency servicing, such as fallen trees and branches after a storm.

**Fire and Rescue** provides emergency response, technical rescue, fire prevention and fire education programs to protect lives and property from the adverse effects of fires, sudden medical emergencies, or dangerous conditions caused by people or nature.





## **2.0 Drivers of Forest Change**

## 2.0 Drivers of Forest Change

Coquitlam's urban forest is shaped by a variety of forces. As the city grows and changes, so too do the pressures on trees and forested areas. Climate change, disturbance agents, emergent pests and diseases, urban development and community involvement are all influencing how the forest is managed and how it will function in the future. Understanding these drivers helps to inform how we can plan for change and maintain a resilient urban forest.

### 2.1 Climate Change

Climate change is one of the most significant pressures on Coquitlam's urban forest. In the coming decades, the region is expected to experience warmer average temperatures, wetter winters and drier summers [14]. By 2050, Metro Vancouver's average temperature could rise by 1.7°C under a high-emissions scenario and the number of days exceeding 30°C may increase from two to fourteen per year [15]. These shifts will intensify the urban heat island effect, increase seasonal water deficits and raise the risk of wildfires, especially in areas near forested slopes. Wetter winters could also increase erosion risks on unstable slopes and streambanks. These changing conditions are already impacting the health of native species like western redcedar, which is showing signs of decline due to seasonal water deficits, stress and pest vulnerability. In response, and in alignment with the City's *Climate Action Plan*, planting climate adapted species and integrating trees and green infrastructure into urban design will be a key part of Coquitlam's climate adaptation strategy.

### 2.2 Disturbance Agents, Emergent Pests and Diseases

In addition to climate stress, the urban forest is increasingly affected by natural disturbance agents. Tree health is being impacted by **pests and diseases**. Native species like western hemlock are vulnerable to laminated root rot and other fungal pathogens, while pests such as the hemlock looper moth can cause widespread defoliation. These pressures are made worse by environmental stress. Meanwhile, invasive pests like the emerald ash borer pose a growing threat. Ash trees represent approximately 10% of Coquitlam's street tree inventory, and monitoring and diversification efforts are essential to preparing for future outbreaks [16].

**Seasonal water deficits** have become more frequent and severe, particularly during the summer months. In response, the City began a watering program in 2015 using tree bags to help newly planted trees establish more successfully. **Windstorms** also damage trees, particularly when forest edges are newly created within the first five to ten years after development. To reduce the risk of wind-throw, professional assessments are conducted when new edges are created, and proactive pruning is used to strengthen tree resilience.

**Wildfire**, once a less prominent risk in coastal communities, is becoming a more pressing concern. Rising summer temperatures and extended dry periods increase the risk of fires in forested parts of Coquitlam. The City's *Community Wildfire Resiliency Plan* provides a framework for managing this risk through planning, public education, emergency preparedness, and fuel management in parks and other high-risk areas.



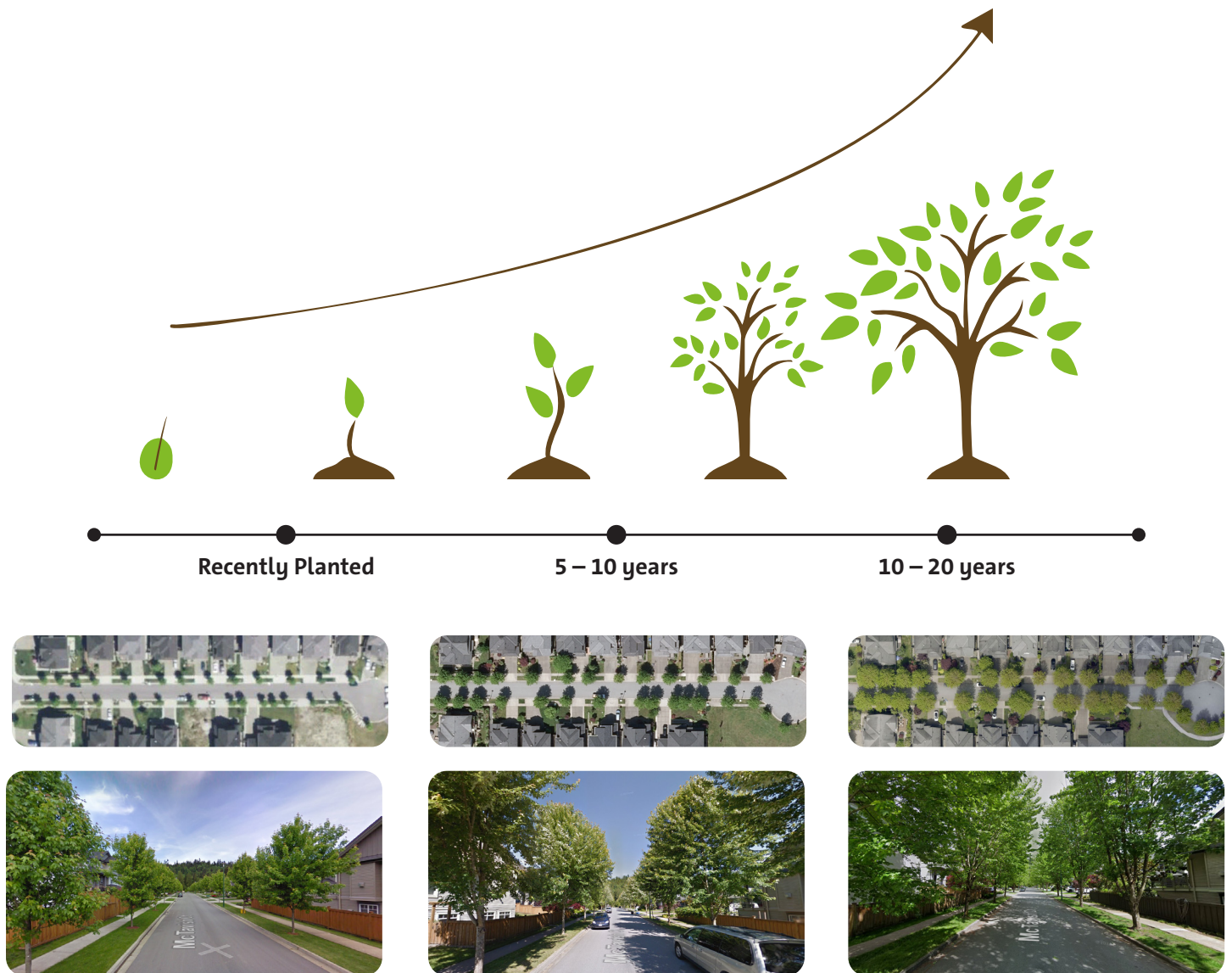
(From left) Tree bags installed on newly planted trees on a boulevard in Coquitlam; fallen hemlock tree after a windstorm; forest fires may become more common in heavily forested areas in and around the city; emerald ash borer could devastate the local ash trees (Credits: Diamond Head Consulting)

## 2.3 Urban Development

Coquitlam is a growing community. The City anticipates an increase of 72,000 residents between 2021 and 2041. Urban forestry and strategic planning play a vital role in balancing Coquitlam’s rapid growth with the protection of natural systems. The City currently utilizes several tools to incorporate trees and greenspace into urban design, including the *Official Community Plan*, the *Environmental Sustainability Plan*, the *Climate Action Plan* and Tree Management Bylaw, which allow the City to balance development and the urban forest. However, housing legislation changes mandated by the Province, including redevelopment of single-family residential properties to small-scale multi-unit housing and establishing minimum heights and densities in proximity to Transit-Oriented Areas, will make it more challenging to retain existing trees on redevelopment sites and integrate new trees and green spaces into neighbourhoods.

In recent years, growth within the Urban Containment Boundary has accelerated alongside tree planting. The City has worked closely with developers to expand tree planting in Northeast Coquitlam — one of the fastest-growing areas of the city.

### Tree Growth Over Time



## 2.4 Community Involvement

Community involvement is at the heart of Coquitlam’s urban forest success. Residents, schools and local organizations play a vital role in caring for trees and natural spaces, sustaining the environmental, social and cultural benefits that define the city’s landscape. Through City-supported programs like Tree Spree, Adopt-a-Trail and Bad Seed, thousands of volunteers contribute their time to planting, learning and protecting Coquitlam’s green spaces. Nature education programs, such as tours and workshops, help bring residents into our greenspaces as well. Community partners such as School District 43, the Burke Mountain Naturalists and Hoy-Scott Watershed Society further amplify these efforts through education, restoration and habitat protection. Together with many dedicated residents, Coquitlam continues to build on its legacy of shared stewardship — creating a greener, healthier and more resilient community for generations.





# **3.0 Vision for the Future**

## 3.0 Vision for the Future

### 3.1 What We Heard

Coquitlam's Urban Forest Management Strategy is built on a community-supported long-term vision for growing and maintaining a healthy urban forest. To help shape that vision, the City hosted 13 engagement activities during Phase 1 in spring and summer 2024, reaching more than 780 participants. Engagement included an online survey, interactive mapping tool, eight in-person pop-ups, two Council Advisory Committee meetings and three workshops with community members. A Community Working Group was established to provide ongoing input. City staff also met with *kʷikwəλəm* First Nation to discuss the plans for the Strategy and seek feedback and involvement.

Across all activities, participants expressed a strong desire for a growing, interconnected, resilient and accessible urban forest. They viewed the urban forest not simply as trees, but as a vital natural system that supports biodiversity, climate adaptation and community well-being. Through the interactive mapping tool and pop-up events, residents identified both their favourite forested places and areas needing improvement. Mundy Park stood out as the most valued location, appreciated for its natural beauty, forest trails and year-round shade. Overall, 65% of survey respondents wanted more trees in their neighbourhoods and prioritized planting in dense urban areas, along residential streets and greenways, and at parks and playgrounds.

#### Top 5 Urban Forest Values



**92%**  
**Ecological benefits** (e.g. biodiversity and animal habitat)



**90%**  
**Environmental** (e.g. reduces soil erosion, rainwater management, air purification, wind protection)



**88%**  
**Beautification and enjoyment of spaces** (e.g. parks and trails)



**87%**  
**Health and social** (e.g. improved mental health, air quality and water quality).



**86%**  
**Climate change adaptation and mitigation** (e.g. shade and cooling, carbon capture and storage)



*Mundy Park offers Coquitlam residents a chance to escape into the forest without leaving the City.*

#### Vision

*Coquitlam's urban forest is a living network of trees, parks and forests that makes our city greener, cooler and healthier. Together we will grow, protect and care for the urban forest so that it continues to support nature and community for generations to come.*

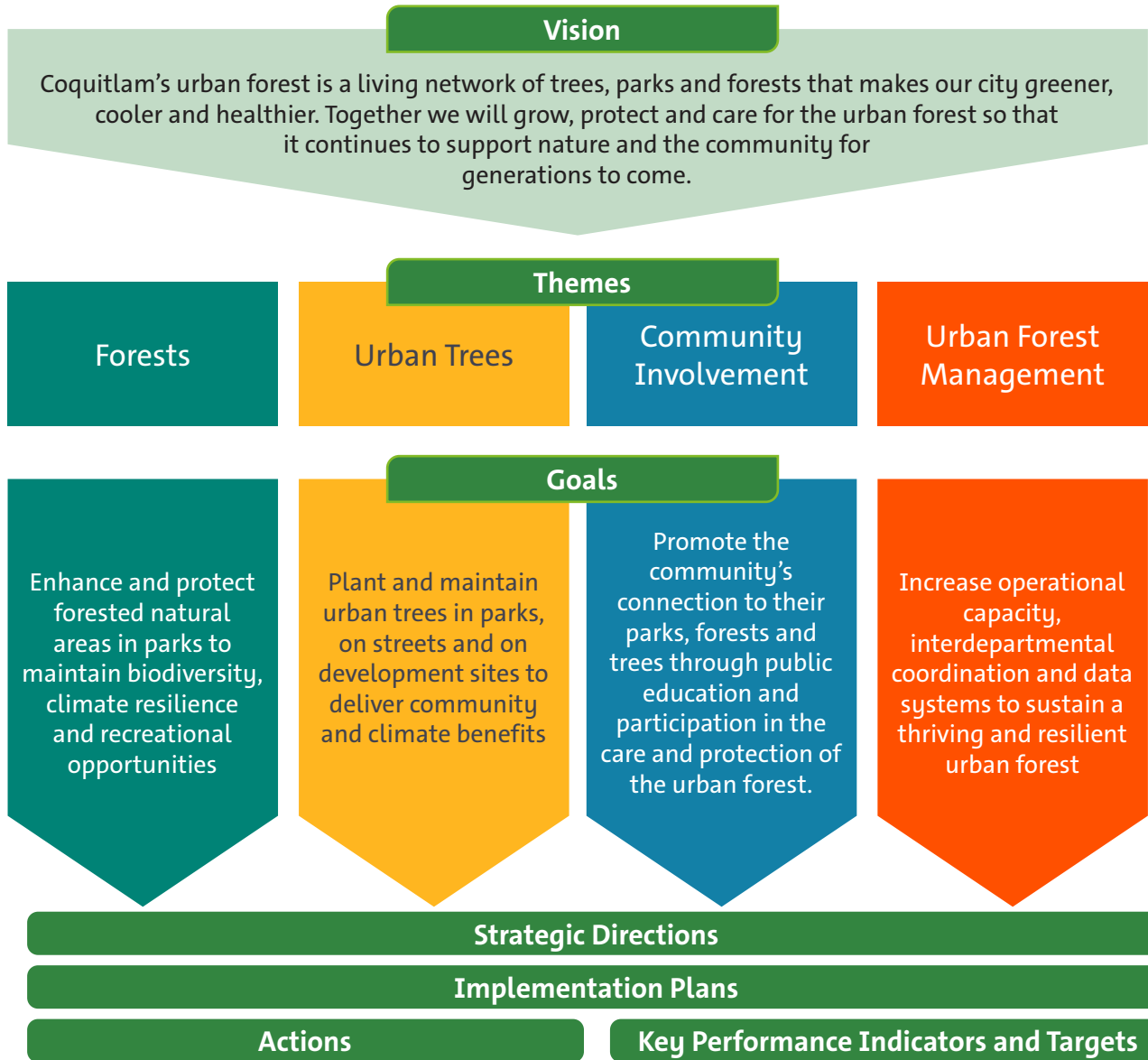
The City of Coquitlam's vision for the urban forest was shaped through input from community members, staff and partners. It provides a unifying direction for how the City will protect, manage and grow its urban forest over the coming decades, ensuring that today's decisions support a resilient, sustainable and equitable forest for future generations.



# **4.0 Strategic Framework**

# 4.0 Strategic Framework

The vision is supported by four goals organized under four theme areas. Together, these goals and their 14 Strategic Directions form the framework for future Urban Forest Management Strategy Implementation Plans, guiding coordinated action across City departments, partners and the community.



## 4.1 Forests



Coquitlam's forests form an extensive network of more than 100 municipal forested parks, totalling 812 hectares of land, 385 kilometres of watercourses and riparian areas, and 140 kilometres of connected trails. Regional and provincial parks, although managed by senior levels of government, protect additional forested areas within the municipality. These forested parks and corridors are the ecological foundation of the city, providing wildlife habitat, air purification, carbon storage, stormwater management, and cooling during increasingly hot summers. They also offer year-round opportunities for recreation, education and connection with nature.

### Major City Forested Parks

#### Mundy Park

At more than 178 hectares, Mundy Park is one of Metro Vancouver's largest urban forests and a cornerstone of Coquitlam's natural park system. Its unfragmented second-growth forest, two lakes and rich understory vegetation provide habitat for a wide variety of birds, amphibians and small mammals. The park's extensive trail network attracts thousands of visitors each year, offering an accessible and immersive nature experience in the heart of the city.

### Regional and Provincial Parks

#### Minnekhada Regional Park

Located in Northeast Coquitlam, Minnekhada Regional Park covers more than 200 hectares of forest, marshland and rocky outcrops. Managed by Metro Vancouver, the park offers a refuge for wildlife and a quiet natural retreat for residents and visitors. Its diverse habitats support birdwatching, hiking and environmental education opportunities.

#### Pinecone Burke Provincial Park

At over 38,000 hectares, Pinecone Burke Provincial Park is the largest protected area influencing Coquitlam's canopy and watershed. Its wilderness landscapes of old-growth forests, alpine ridges, wetlands and lakes extend from Burke Mountain to the Pitt River. The park supports salmon-bearing streams, diverse wildlife populations, and extensive recreational opportunities, including hiking, paddling and backcountry exploration.

#### Coquitlam River Park

Spanning 67 hectares along the Coquitlam River, this park protects one of the region's most important river corridors. Its nearly 10 kilometres of trails connect residents to the river's riparian forest and floodplain ecosystems, providing valuable habitat and migration routes for all five species of Pacific salmon and other wildlife while supporting recreation and cultural connection.

#### Āléxətəm Regional Park

At the confluence of the Coquitlam and Fraser Rivers, sits Āléxətəm Regional Park (formerly Colony Farm Regional Park), one of the most significant bird habitats in the Lower Mainland. At approximately 260 hectares in size, it spans open fields and hedgerows dating back to its use as a farm throughout the 20th century, as well as ecologically significant riparian wetlands. The park's multi-use trails make it a popular destination for birdwatchers, cyclists and pedestrians seeking easy access to nature near the city.

#### Widgeon Marsh Regional Park

Widgeon Marsh Regional Park, which opened to the public in 2025, protects over 600 hectares of one of the largest and most ecologically significant freshwater wetland complexes in the Lower Mainland. Located northeast of Coquitlam in the Pitt River watershed, the Park's marshes, riparian forests and floodplains support salmon-bearing streams, migratory birds, amphibians and other sensitive wildlife.

## Forests Snapshot

Coquitlam's forests provide most of the city's canopy cover and urban forest benefits. They are essential hubs and corridors for wildlife and recreation and provide unique opportunities to connect with nature near our homes.

### Key Metrics

100	Municipal and regional parks
385 km	Watercourses
140 km	Trails
80 m	Tallest tree in Coquitlam
5,000	Native trees and shrubs planted annually
3,000m <sup>2</sup>	Riparian habitat restored on average each year
80	Habitat restoration sites (2021)
14,000	Volunteer hours (2021)



**Certified Bear Smart Community**  
(2017)

### Municipal Ravines, Forests and Greenways

Hoy Creek Linear Park  
Ridge Park

### Major Watercourses

Coquitlam River  
Pitt River  
Fraser River  
Scott Creek  
Como Creek

### Municipal Natural and Urban Forests

Mundy Park  
Walton Park  
Coquitlam River Park  
Riverview Forest

### Regional and Provincial Parks

Minnehada Regional Park  
Álexətəm Regional Park  
Widgeon Marsh Regional Park  
Pinecone Burke Provincial Park

## Goal 1

**Enhance and protect forested natural areas in parks to maintain biodiversity, climate resilience and recreational opportunities**

To sustain the long-term health and resilience of Coquitlam's forests and watercourses, the City will expand its forest management framework, restoration programs, and risk management practices through four strategic directions.

### 1.1 Plan and manage forests and natural areas to strengthen resilience and maintain species diversity

Implementation of the Strategy will build on the success of the *Mundy Park Forest Management Plan* and include the development of a Forest Management Framework to guide and prioritize operational activities such as restoration planting.

### 1.2 Restore disturbed forests and natural areas to improve ecosystem function

The City will adopt a proactive and cost-effective approach to natural forest area restoration and invasive plant management that prevents degradation before it becomes widespread, strengthens long-term ecosystem health and supports community involvement.

### 1.3 Identify and manage risks to and from forests and natural areas

The City will strengthen its approach to natural area risk management through an operational focus on forest health, species diversity and maintaining tree cover to support slope stability, and through development standards designed to reduce risks from windthrow, erosion and flooding.

### 1.4 Manage a safe trail system to provide connectivity and access to nature across the city

Updating the City's *Trail Master Plan* will ensure neighbourhood connections with natural areas and integration with the City's transportation network using tools such as upgrades through existing trail programs, rights-of-way and strategic land acquisition.

## 4.2 Urban Trees



Coquitlam's urban trees are an essential part of the city's living infrastructure. The City directly manages an inventory of more than 17,000 street and park trees. These trees line boulevards, enhance parks, and frame neighbourhood streets, providing shade, cooling and access to green space in every part of the city.

Stewarding Coquitlam's urban trees means strengthening care across both public and private lands, ensuring that trees have the space and soil they need to thrive within a growing community. The larger trees are allowed to grow, the greater the ecosystem services they provide, including improving air quality, intercepting stormwater and enhancing neighbourhood character.

As climate conditions shift, species selection, site preparation and planting design must adapt to ensure that the right tree is planted in the right place. Following 5-10-15, a best-practice guideline for urban forest resilience, will help diversify Coquitlam's canopy and reduce vulnerability to pests and diseases. The rule advises that no single species should represent more than 5% of trees in the urban forest, no genus group more than 10% and no family group more than 15% [17]. This approach will help protect Coquitlam's urban forest against threats such as the emerald ash borer, now detected in nearby Metro Vancouver communities.

Planting trees is only the first step. Ongoing investment in proactive management is essential to sustain the health and longevity of urban trees. Preventive care such as regular pruning, watering and soil management helps trees establish strong structure and resilience, reducing the likelihood of future hazards or expensive removals. Addressing small issues early is far more cost-effective than responding to advanced decline or damage later. Shifting toward proactive management will help ensure trees remain healthy, safe and a defining feature of Coquitlam's landscape.



## Urban Trees Snapshot

Coquitlam's urban trees are an integral part of the city. Our trees provide \$161 million in ecosystem services, fostering community resiliency to climate change and a deep connection to the natural environment, even in our urban centres.

### Of the 17,000 City owned urban trees...



**62%**

are street trees



**38%**

are in parks



**3,000**

trees are watered every year



**1,850**

trees are pruned annually

### 190 species and 70 genera are represented

The three most common species are:



Red Maple

**13%**



Western Redcedar

**5%**



Douglas Fir

**5%**



**800**

trees are assessed for health every year



**500**

trees are planted on City property every year

- 17% are planted by the City
- 83% are planted by developers

## Goal 2

**Plant and maintain urban trees in parks, on streets, and on development sites to deliver community and climate benefits**

Coquitlam's urban trees deliver measurable benefits to residents, neighbourhoods and the climate. To maintain and enhance this resource as the city grows, the Strategy provides a framework for coordinated planting, protection and long-term management of urban trees across the community.

### 2.1 Implement tree planting requirements for all development sites city-wide and implement a Tree Initiatives Program (TIP)

The City can leverage development and densification to grow Coquitlam's urban forest through a program that receives contributions when tree planting targets on private property cannot be fully met.

### 2.2 Prioritize diverse and resilient tree planting city-wide to deliver shade, storm water management and community health benefits

A city-wide tree planting plan will guide proactive planting by prioritizing locations that need shade and improved rainwater management, including school grounds, and by selecting diverse, climate-resilient species to strengthen the long-term health of the urban forest.

### 2.3 Expand proactive maintenance to extend tree health, safety and lifespan for all City maintained urban trees

A shift from reactive maintenance towards proactive maintenance can be achieved through early monitoring efforts, regular watering and pruning maintenance and inventory standards, supported by potential updates to pest management and tree risk policies.

## 4.3 Community Involvement



Coquitlam's parks and natural areas thrive because of the people who care for them. A resilient urban forest depends on collaboration among landowners, residents, community groups, First Nations and all levels of government. Continued involvement and partnerships are essential to achieving the goals of this Strategy.

The City leads and supports numerous initiatives that invite residents, students and local organizations to take part in urban forest stewardship. Programs such as Tree Spree, Adopt-a-Park and Bad Seed connect people to nearby green spaces like Mundy Park, Town Centre Park and the Coquitlam River trail system. Between 2008 and 2021, more than 6,000 volunteers helped remove invasive species and plant native trees, contributing over 14,000 hours of restoration work. City staff also host hands-on workshops to teach residents how to identify, plant and prune trees, building confidence and capacity to care for trees on private property.

Beyond City-led programs, urban forest stewardship thrives through the work of schools, community groups and partners. The Burke Mountain Naturalists, a long-standing local non-profit with over 200 active members, support wildlife monitoring, ecological restoration and environmental education across Coquitlam. The City also collaborates with School District 43 to integrate tree stewardship into classroom learning, helping students experience the urban forest firsthand. The *kʷikwəłəm* First Nation, who have cared for these lands and waters since time immemorial, continue to work with the City toward a shared future based on partnership and reconciliation.



## Community Involvement Snapshot

Community participation is a central component of a healthy urban forest. Together, the Coquitlam community engages, stewards and protects our urban forest.

### Engagement and Satisfaction

Between 2008 and 2021:

**6,000+**

volunteers have helped remove invasive plants and plant native species

**14,000+**

volunteers hours have been recorded for City-run stewardship events

**95%**

of Coquitlam residents are satisfied with the parks, trails and greenspaces of the city

### City Programs



#### Tree Spree

helped plant **10,000** trees in 2022



#### Adopt-a-Trail

has supported **120+** km of trails



#### Bad Seed

invasive removal and restoration of **3,000 m<sup>2</sup>** annually



#### Public workshops

**20+** annually to educate residents on tree care

### School Partnerships

deliver urban forest stewardship programs

### School Programming

engages youth with the urban forest

### Non Profit Organizations

contribute grassroot efforts to urban forest stewardship



#### Hoy-Scott Watershed Society

supports salmon habitat



#### Burke Mountain Naturalists

support environmental actions

## Goal 3

Promote the community's connection to their parks, forests and trees through public education and participation in the care and protection of the urban forest

The urban forest thrives through the collective care and commitment of the community. Building on Coquitlam's strong foundation of participation, this Strategy identifies three strategic directions to expand, support and celebrate meaningful involvement across all sectors of the community.

### 3.1 Support, expand and celebrate community efforts to plant, protect and care for trees

Expanding community programs that bring residents together to learn about and care for the urban forest, using events, volunteer opportunities and educational initiatives, will foster shared responsibility and long-term stewardship across Coquitlam.

### 3.2 Incentivize tree planting and care on private property

To support residents and businesses in growing Coquitlam's urban forest, the City will continue to deliver community tree planting programs and consider a range of incentive programs such as a subsidized tree sale to make planting and caring for trees on private land more accessible.

### 3.3 Build partnerships across sectors to help grow and care for the urban forest

Collaboration will remain central to growing and sustaining Coquitlam's urban forest, and the City will look to strengthen partnerships with the kʷikʷəłəm First Nation, School District 43, local businesses, BC Hydro, post-secondary institutions, and corporate or institutional landholders to align stewardship practices, support learning opportunities and expand canopy cover across the city.

## 4.4 Urban Forest Management



Urban forest management is the practice of planning, planting, protecting and maintaining trees to maximize their benefits and minimize risk in communities. Coquitlam's qualified urban forestry staff deliver a range of services including tree maintenance, planning, permitting, education and risk management. Over the past decade, the city has made significant progress in strengthening and expanding its urban forest program. Continued investment in staff capacity, tools and resources will be essential over the coming decades to position Coquitlam as a regional leader in sustainable urban forest management and achieve the vision of the Strategy.

Asset management provides a structured approach for assessing the condition, value and life-cycle needs of public assets. While traditionally focused on built infrastructure, many municipalities are now applying asset management principles to natural assets such as trees, soils and riparian areas. Recognizing the urban forest as green infrastructure enables the City to define levels of service, allocate resources efficiently and plan for long-term maintenance and renewal.

As the city grows, Coquitlam's urban forest faces new pressures from climate change, development and aging infrastructure. Effective management requires an adaptive and transparent approach that tracks performance, measures results and adjusts priorities as conditions evolve. The success of this Strategy depends on the City's ability to monitor urban forest changes over time and report on progress in a way that supports learning and continuous improvement.



## Urban Forest Management *Snapshot*

Urban forest management is the practice of planting, protecting and maintaining trees to maximize their benefits and minimize risk in communities.



### Parks and Capital Projects

The Urban Forest Team provides core services like tree planting, pruning, watering, public education, natural area enhancement and bylaw administration



### Planning and Development

Develops key planning policies to define future parks, environmentally sensitive areas and greenspaces as well as reviewing landscape plans for development sites



### Engineering and Public Works

Manages core infrastructure and related tree care, oversees watershed and riparian functions as part of stormwater management and responds to emergencies such as fallen trees after storms



### Fire and Rescue

Lead fire prevention and fire education programs to protect the community against wildfires

### Urban forest management includes:

- Planting
- Maintenance
- Monitoring
- Planning
- Public Engagement
- Risk Assessment
- Permitting
- Natural Area Restoration
- Storm Response

## Goal 4

**Increase operational capacity, interdepartmental coordination and data systems to sustain a thriving and resilient urban forest**

To continue strengthening Coquitlam's urban forest management program, the City will focus on four strategic directions that emphasize leadership, integration, transparency and sustainable resourcing.

### 4.1 Continue to lead by example in how we manage, grow and protect the urban forest

Leadership in urban forest management could be achieved by aligning practices with recognized industry standards; collaborating with regional, provincial, and national partners to share knowledge; piloting innovative projects and exploring designations such as Tree City of the World.

### 4.2 Integrate urban trees and forested areas into the City's resource and asset management systems

The City will explore the use of natural asset management principles to guide data-driven decisions, define service levels and align resources with its inventory of trees, Streamside Protection and Enhancement Areas and other natural assets, supported by updated and expanded tree inventory data.

### 4.3 Track progress, report publicly, and adapt management practices over time

To maintain transparency and support adaptive management, the Implementation Plan will be updated to reflect new data, lessons learned and emerging trends, with an interdepartmental team coordinating actions and ensuring accountability across departments.

### 4.4 Ensure resources are available to deliver the urban forest vision over time

Achieving Coquitlam's urban forest vision will require sustained investment through City resources, grants and partnerships to support long-term implementation, including tree planting and high-quality tree care.



## **5.0 Implementation and Monitoring**

## 5.0 Implementation and Monitoring

This Strategy establishes a long-term vision and goals that will guide Coquitlam’s approach to protecting, managing and growing its urban forest. Implementation will be prioritized and communicated through the regularly updated Implementation Plan to provide a practical and flexible framework for advancing the long-term Strategy. This phased approach enables the City to:

- Translate the long-term goals into clear, achievable actions
- Align priorities with annual budgeting and capital planning cycles
- Evaluate performance and report on progress at regular intervals
- Adapt to new information, evolving challenges and changing community priorities

By dividing implementation into manageable phases, the City can maintain accountability and transparency while supporting continuous improvement through adaptive management.

### 5.1 Targets and Monitoring Progress

Specific performance targets and regular monitoring of accomplishments is essential to ensure the successful delivery of the Strategy and the achievement of its long-term goals. Tracking performance allows the City to document targets, evaluate outcomes, identify challenges early, and adjust priorities as conditions change.

A range of performance measures will be used to capture the ecological, social and operational benefits provided by Coquitlam’s urban forest. Given the city is in a dynamic growth stage, the canopy cover will vary over time with the development of new and densifying neighbourhoods. The target percentage is based on an aspirational estimate for the short and mid term with potential increases in canopy cover in the long-term (20+ years). Together, these indicators will create a consistent and transparent framework for assessing success and guiding adaptive management.

**Table 1** outlines the proposed monitoring framework and performance indicators that will be used to measure successes in implementing this Strategy based on specific service level targets. These targets will focus on objective measurements in each indicator area.

*Table 1 Core monitoring framework to support the tracking of the Strategy implementation. These metrics are samples that will be refined through the development of the Implementation Plan.*

Indicator Area	Annual Performance Targets	Example Measures
<b>A. Tree Planting and Replacement</b>	5,000 – 7,000 trees planted annually <sup>2</sup>	Net new trees planted annually by the City, developers and as the result of incentive programs on private property. Compliance with required tree replacement.
<b>B. Urban Tree Health</b>	90% City tree survival 5 years after planting	Condition and survival rates of City trees.
<b>C. Urban Tree Diversity</b>	Plant no more than 5% of any species, 10% of any genus group and 15% of any family group annually	Species, genus and family composition.
<b>D. Forest and Natural Area Management</b>	3,000 square meters of annual forested area restoration planting	Condition of forested natural areas. Area of restored forested natural areas.
<b>E. Community Involvement</b>	5% increase in annual volunteer hours	Volunteer hours and participation in stewardship programs.
<b>F. Canopy Cover Target</b>	Refresh LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) Data periodically	50% city-wide.

Monitoring results will inform and guide updates to priorities, budgets and resource needs, ensuring that actions remain aligned with the Strategy’s goals and evolving community priorities. As new data, technologies and practices emerge, the City will use lessons learned to refine methods, address challenges and continuously improve the urban forest management program.

<sup>2</sup> Subject to annual review – number of trees planted will vary from year to year.



## 6.0 References

## 6.0 References

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# Appendix 1      Glossary

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**Asset management:** A coordinated approach to maintaining, improving and operating assets in a cost-effective way throughout their lifecycle.

**Biodiversity:** The variety of living organisms, such as plants, animals and fungi within a specific area.

**Canopy Cover:** A measure of the extent of the urban forest based on the amount of ground covered by tree leaves when viewed from above.

**Green infrastructure:** Natural and built systems that support ecological and water functions, such as trees, rain gardens and permeable surfaces.

**Greenfield development:** Development that transforms natural or rural lands into urban uses.

**Natural asset:** Ecosystems or natural resources, such as trees, forests and riparian areas that provide municipal services, such as stormwater management or air purification.

**Natural Asset Management:** Natural asset management is an established approach to recognizing and managing ecosystems, such as forests, streams, wetlands and riparian corridors, as vital infrastructure providing public services.

**Urban Containment Boundary:** A stable, long-term, regionally defined area for urban development across Metro Vancouver.

**Urban forest:** All treed landscapes within the city boundary, spanning residential yards, streets, parks and natural areas.

**Urban forest management:** The sustained planning, planting, protection, maintenance and care of trees, forests and related resources in and around cities and communities for economic, environmental, social and public health benefits for people and wildlife.

## Appendix 2 What Our Urban Forest Looks Like Now

Coquitlam's urban forest is extensive. As of 2022, Coquitlam's city-wide tree canopy covered approximately 52% of the total land area, more than 6,500 hectares (Figure 3). Much of this canopy is concentrated in large natural areas, including the expansive Pinecone Burke Provincial Park in the north. These natural areas play a vital role in maintaining biodiversity, stabilizing slopes and intercepting rainwater.

Within the Urban Containment Boundary where most housing, businesses and infrastructural are located, canopy cover averages 33%. Outside the Urban Containment Boundary, the canopy cover is 69%. At 52% city-wide, this places Coquitlam among the top third of municipalities in Metro Vancouver for urban canopy cover.

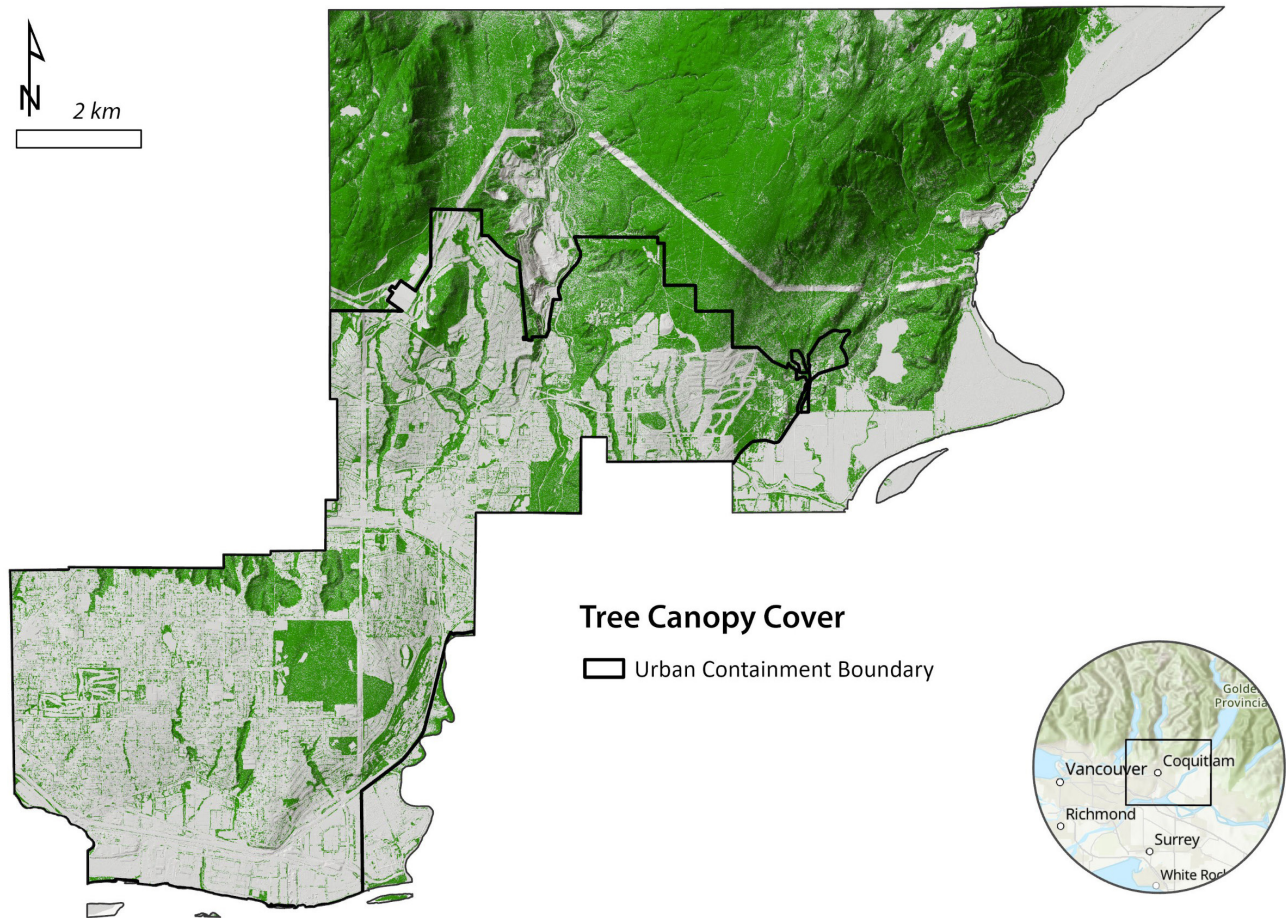


Figure 3 Canopy cover across the City of Coquitlam (2022).

Coquitlam's canopy is almost evenly distributed across public and private land. An estimated 54% of the canopy lies on public land, with 46% on private property. Public parks and civic space contain over one-third of all canopy within the Urban Containment Boundary. Smaller public lands, such as school grounds, also provide daily contact with nature for children and youth. Coquitlam will continue to work with partners like School District 43 to support school-greening initiatives and expand tree planting in learning environments.

## Appendix 3 Policy Context

Coquitlam’s urban forest is shaped by legislation, bylaws and municipal policies and plans. The *Community Charter* and *Local Government Act* provide a framework that allows the City to regulate trees on public and private land and the City has developed several strategies and policies to reflect the importance of the urban forest for livability, environmental and ecological services. This Strategy acts as a link between all municipal policies relevant to urban forestry (Figure 4).

Some of the most relevant plans are:

**Official Community Plan (OCP):** Integrates green space into urban planning and recognizes trees as essential for livability, health and biodiversity.

**Environmental Sustainability Plan (ESP):** Calls for canopy tracking, tree planting and development of the Urban Forest Management Strategy.

**Climate Action Plan (CAP):** Calls for embedding of climate solutions across City plans and operations.

**Climate Adaptation Strategic Plan:** Promotes monitoring and replacement of climate-sensitive trees.

**Parks and Recreation Master Plan:** Highlights the role of trees and green spaces in community well-being and resilience.

**Tree Management Bylaw:** Regulates tree protection and removal on private land.

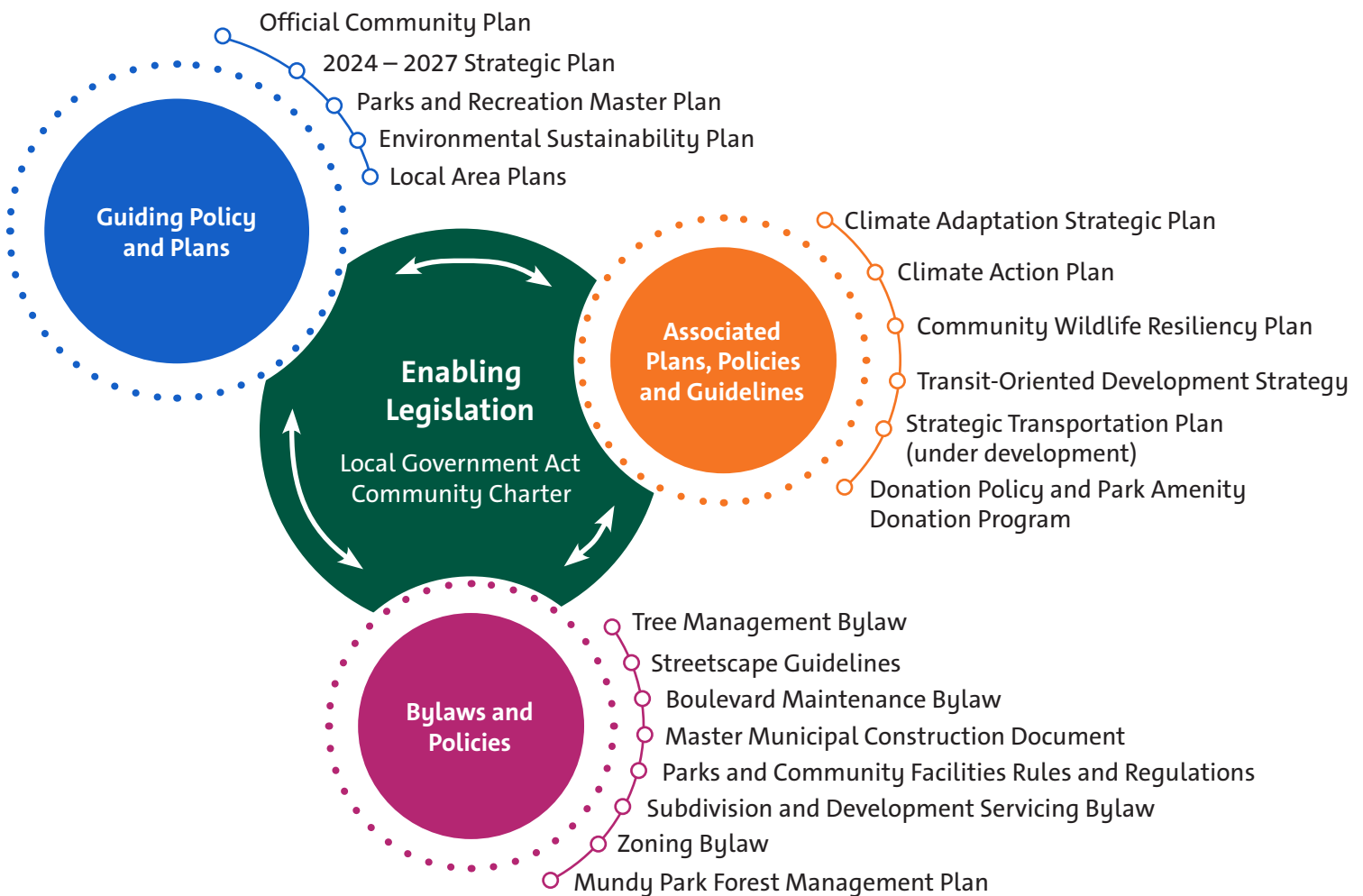


Figure 4 Policy framework for the City of Coquitlam.

